

Andree Greenberg - Redwood City says "no," but

From: David Lewis <dlewis@savesfbay.org>
To: <farmerjohnmuller@aol.com>, <terry_young@mindspring.com>, <seliahul@hotmail.com>, <macmcgrath@comcast.net>, <s.moore@nute-engr.com>, <bwolfe@waterboards.ca.gov>, <tmumley@waterboards.ca.gov>, <srlee@waterboards.ca.gov>, <agreenberg@waterboards.ca.gov>, <fweber@waterboards.ca.gov>, <tdoduc@waterboards.ca.gov>
Date: 5/4/2012 3:33 PM
Subject: Redwood City says "no," but
Attachments: FrontWEBPAGE_02-1.gif

Cargill and DMB say they will keep pushing to develop on San Francisco Bay's restorable salt ponds.

Thursday afternoon, the Redwood City Council announced it will consider a **recommendation to terminate Cargill/DMB's massive bay fill development**, which has been languishing for over a year. Rather than wait until Monday night for the Council to officially deny their proposal, Cargill/DMB said they will withdraw it. This action reflects the massive local and regional opposition voiced against building on this site over the past five years.

However, **the developer immediately announced it plans to re-submit another version of this inappropriate and unprecedented bay fill project.**

Rather than continue spending tens of millions of dollars attempting to fill in our Bay, Save The Bay encourages Cargill to seize this opportunity to instead donate or sell these ponds to the public for full restoration, and not to submit any further proposals to develop this key piece of San Francisco Bay. Redwood City's restorable salt ponds are a critically important piece of the Bay. Restoring the site would help the Bay meet the scientifically established goal of 100,000 acres of healthy tidal marsh around San Francisco Bay - benefiting both people and wildlife.

While the fight is not yet over, these development indicate the Redwood City officials are starting to listen to the overwhelming public opposition to this project, and support for full restoration of these salt ponds.

THE DAILY JOURNAL

San Mateo County's homepage

Saltworks plan dries up May 04, 2012 http://smdailyjournal.com/article_preview.php?id=233696&title=Saltworks%20plan%20dries%20up

By Michelle Durand Daily Journal Staff

The controversial plan to build up to 12,000 homes on Bayfront salt ponds appears to be dead — at least for the foreseeable future — after the developer announced its formal withdrawal in response to a recommendation the Redwood City Council deny the application.

Two councilmembers are recommending the council at its Monday night meeting scrap the Saltworks "50-50 plan" because the application has sat for three years without an actual project description and the environmental review process has stalled. On Thursday, just hours after the city announced the recommendation, developer DMB Redwood City Saltworks announced its intention to formally pull the application.

"We believe it is important to make our intentions clear and to respect the City Council's need for formal resolution on the 50/50 balanced plan," said John Bruno, senior vice president and general manager for DMB Redwood City Saltworks, in a prepared statement.

On the city's end, an ad hoc committee of Councilman Jeff Ira and Councilwoman Barbara Pierce is recommending the council forget asking the public for an advisory vote on the Saltworks project and instead deny the project application outright. Such a move wouldn't prevent developer DMB from submitting a new application in the future but would free city staff from processing anything related to the project and possibly tamp down long-standing debate over the proposed project.

"We continue to get a barrage of emails and letters and are constantly responding to things in the community. It takes a lot of staff resources," said City Manager Bob Bell.

Yesterday's announcements, and the actions the last few weeks, on the proposal are "significant" because it shows a sea change in officials' thinking, said David Lewis, executive director of nonprofit Save the Bay which has sounded the loudest opposition to the plan. "For the first time, you see city officials actually standing up for the general plan and zoning designations. They should have done that a long time ago," Lewis said.

Bell said the city prefers to move away from attention on Saltworks and instead focus on other needs such as the development of Depot Circle, the Stanford campus and downtown.

Bell said it is impossible to put a figure on the money and man hours spent on the project which, based on the now-defunct "50-50 plan" called for a mix of housing, retail and open space. The plan took years of time leading up to its application submission three years ago but developer DMB Associates — then rebranded as DMB Redwood City Saltworks — said in November it planned to revise and resubmit a plan. First, the city was told a new plan would come in late winter, then maybe spring, then summer, said Bell.

It seemed as if the company just didn't know when it would resubmit the plan, Bell said. However, yesterday's announcement offers some amount of clarity.

Last month, Councilwoman Rosanne Foust suggested seeking an advisory vote from the public on how the city should move forward or if it even should. But the ad hoc committee appointed by Mayor Alicia Aguirre said such a vote wouldn't be prudent to waste city resources on a project for which a completed description and application doesn't exist.

Another challenge is not knowing even what to ask the public to vote on, Bell said.

"There's no description so it's kind of hard to vote on something that doesn't exist," Bell said.

Prior to DMB's withdrawal announcement, Councilman Ian Bain, who has publicly advocated for a vote, said he is open to other options but that if the city does want public opinion, a vote is a better choice than a poll.

Bain said some have asked what has changed in the time since the city began its review of the application — in other words, why even make the denial?

"What's changed is that the developer has put its proposal on hold, but has not withdrawn it. In the meantime, this issue has dominated public conversation and has overshadowed everything else we are

doing as a city,” Bain said.

The last three years, and many years even before the application’s submission, have been filled with dueling ballot measures over the development, surveys, petitions, claims Foust has conflicted interests as head of the county economic group supporting the plan and ire by some that the developer funds the environmental review process. Even the Occupy movement weighed in with a protest.

At the heart of the matter is a 1,436-acre site of salt ponds which preservationists want restored to tidal wetlands and that the developer sees as the future site of Peninsula housing.

The original proposal — now shelved — called for reserving 50 percent of the land as permanent open space, public recreation and tidal marsh restoration and develop the remaining half into housing, schools, parks and retail and transit facilities.

In November, the company said it would re-submit a scaled-back plan based on community feedback during the scoping process. In yesterday’s announcement, Bruno re-emphasized it has been working on a project providing for the restoration of the majority of the site and restricts development to property already reserved for urban use in the city’s general plan.

Dan Ponti, of Redwood City Neighbors United, the group that formed specifically to keep an eye on this project, applauded first the ad hoc committee’s recommendation and later the DMB plan to withdraw.

“I hope they don’t submit another development proposal. It’s not a place to put housing and people no matter how they scale it,” Ponti said.

Lewis hopes the City Council Monday night emphasizes it does not want development on the site and said DMB’s plan to someday return shows it is out of touch with the public outcry.

“I think they’re still not hearing it,” he said. “They just don’t get it.”

The Redwood City Council meets 7 p.m. Monday, May 7 at City Hall, 1017 Middlefield Road, Redwood City.

--

David Lewis
Executive Director, Save The Bay
dlewis@saveSFbay.org | 510.463.6802 | [@saveSFbay](https://twitter.com/saveSFbay)
Sip wine and save the Bay at the Uncorked Wine Festival!